193 E

B-1

EB

ED

ORIGIN/ACTION
ARA-10

RMR	REP	AF
ARA	EUR	PE
NEA	EA	INR 6
E	P	IO
L	FBO	AID
	AM 2	S/S 10
AGR	COM	FRB
INT	LAB	TAR
TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 3	CIA 16	NAVY 10
OSD 34	USIA 10	NSA 9
		NSC 6

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

(Reproduced for poor microfilm)

FOR RM USE ONLY

A-044
NO.

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM
HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PINS, GT

MAR 29 10 02 AM 1974

FROM : Amembassy Guatemala

DATE: 22 March 1974

SUBJECT : INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents, February 1974

REF :

SUMMARY: The February total of 77 incidents of a possible political nature was the highest monthly total since October 1972. The sharp increase was mainly due to the high number of election-related incidents. Electoral animosities probably accounted for 23 incidents, including 14 directed against Opposition Front members. Incidents included the kidnapping of four DCG leaders in Chiquimula, an armed attack against a DCG congressional candidate in Puerto Barrios, the bombing of an MLN leader's home near the capital, and the still unexplained murder of a Peraltista. The overall level of political violence was higher in January-February 1974 than during the xxxxx 1970 election campaign, but the incidents of political violence were more spectacular in 1970 and involved more important political figures. The most sensational internal security story this month was an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt against two of President Arana's half-sisters. Not included in the monthly total were 13 apparent common criminals murdered by the "Death Squad" [redacted]

1. Statistics: The [redacted] total of 77 press-reported incidents of a possible political nature was the highest monthly total since October 1972 and surpassed the monthly averages for both 1972 (63) and 1973 (54). This sharp increase in the number of incidents was primarily due to the large number of apparently election-related

SECRET

SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

FORM DS-323

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY
[X] In [ ] Out

Drafted by: POL:RFBurghardt:jcp

Coordinated and Classification Approved by: POL:WTPryce

Clearances:
POL-1:ETerrell
DATT:Col. McTaggart

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE: OCT 1989
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

DECLASSIFIED

actions -- 23 incidents representing 30% of the total. An unusually high number of this month's incidents, 31 (40%), were attributed in the press to Government security forces or the Coalition parties. The Far Left may have been responsible for three incidents (4%) and the remaining 56% were not readily attributable.

Statistics included 26 kidnappings and 24 assassinations, five with reported signs of torture. The capital region had the highest number of incidents (34), including a high number of kidnappings of young men. Victims this month included 11 campesinos, four students, five minor political activists, two civil servants, two laborers, an assistant mayor, a policeman, a businessman and a lawyer.

II. Violence and the Elections: Partisans of the Opposition Front were the targets in fourteen out of the 23 apparently election-related incidents. PR supporters were the victims in four cases, Peraltistas in three and Government Coalition activists in two. The February total of incidents attributable to electoral animosities represents a sharp rise compared with six such incidents in January and three in December.

Throughout the campaign period, the most serious incidents of political violence have occurred in the eastern departments of Zacapa, Chiquimula and Izabal. On February 8 a military commissioner accompanied by several gunmen reportedly kidnapped the DCG Records Secretary (Secretario de Actas) for Chiquimula along with three party activists, and none of the four victims have appeared since. Opposition Front leaders have charged that Bernal Hernández, a Coalition deputy candidate for Chiquimula and personal bodyguard of President Arana, openly threatened DCG candidates in the department with "liquidation" unless they terminated their campaigns.

In the neighboring MLN stronghold of Zacapa, the homes of DCG congressional and mayoral candidates were fired upon February 12, the same day that the party announced the nominees

DECLASSIFIED

In Puerto Barrios, Izabal, on February 16 a heavily armed group, including the local MLN mayoral candidate and two port officials, allegedly fired on a DCG deputy candidate and several party activists, one of whom was seriously wounded. A few days before, MLN leaders reportedly were responsible for turning off the electricity during a Front rally in Livingston and threatening a DCG congressional candidate at gunpoint. Earlier in the month the DCG protested the brief detention at the Zacapa base of the party's suplente congressional candidate for Izabal, Ronaldo Villavicencio.

Outside the eastern region, the most serious incident directed against Opposition Front supporters occurred in Santa Rosa, where MLN gunmen allegedly fired upon the homes of several DCG loyalists in Taxisco, resulting in the death of a child. The DCG also charged that its local leaders and candidates had been threatened at gunpoint in Santa Rosa, as well as in Antigua.

Government and Coalition harassment of the PR appeared to occur mainly in the highlands region, where the party charged that one of its leaders was beaten in El Palmar, Quezaltenango, and that a group of PR activists was stoned and fired upon in San Sebastian, Huehuetenango. The PR also claimed that in the capital one of its activists was kidnapped and several propagandists were roughed up by an armed MLN "shock group."

The Government Coalition was the apparent victim of a terrorist attack on February 4 when two bombs exploded simultaneously in San Juan El Golfo, Guatemala Department, in front of the homes of the local MLN leader and the Coalition's mayoral candidate. The only other reported violence directed against the Coalition was a bizarre case of apparently self-inflicted wounds. On February 26 Eduardo Stricker, a supporter of Government-backed mayoral candidate Ronaldo Porta España, was seriously injured when a homemade bomb exploded in his car. Police investigators concluded that Stricker and three others also in the car at the time had manufactured the bomb themselves and all have been arrested. It still is not clear what the three planned to do with the device, but a police source told us that the incident involved a vendetta within the ranks of Porta's supporters.

The press has surmised there was a political motive in three incidents involving assassinations of Peraltistas, but we have no other information to confirm this interpretation. The

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

most significant case involved Jose Rolando Cofiño Samayoa, an officer of the FUN (a Peraltista group), compadre of Colonel Peralta Azurdia, and moderately wealthy landowner, who was kidnapped along with an assistant on February 2. The bodies of the two men were accidently discovered February 15 in La Gomera, Escuintla, and buried the next day as "unidentified persons." The police, for unexplained reasons, failed to make the usual fingerprint investigations, [redacted] The bodies were exhumed and identified by relatives on February 19. The next day a purported message from the FAR was sent to several newspapers claiming responsibility for the slayings. On the 22nd the press received another FAR letter, this time apparently genuine, which asserted that the first message was a Government fabrication. The second letter charged that the Government had murdered Cofiño and others in an attempt "to create an atmosphere of violence in order to justify a coup or auto-coup d'etat." The police reportedly have arrested three suspects, all from the hamlet in Villa Canales, Guatemala Department, where Cofiño's farm is located.

Comment: Embassy records indicate that in February 1970, the month proceeding the March 1 elections of that year, the incidence of political violence also increased. In February 1970 there were 49 incidents compared with 44 in the proceeding month and a range of 20-40 during 1969. Although these figures indicate a lower level of political violence than in 1974, both pro-Government and Opposition Guatemalans generally agree that the 1970 campaign period was much more violent than the 1974 campaign. The apparent discrepancy is probably explained by the higher number of spectacular incidents in February 1970, including the kidnapping of Foreign Minister Fuentes Mohr, the attempted assassination of Electoral Registrar Walfre del Valle, the death of three MLN and PR partisans in a gunfight in Guatemala City, and the explosion of over a dozen terrorist and propaganda bombs in the capital. The FAR and other subversive groups publicly took credit for many of the 1970 election incidents, whereas in the 1974 campaign most violence was clandestinely performed by right-wing elements, [redacted] Campaign violence this year also was confined almost exclusively to attacks against minor political figures, primarily in the provinces. End Comment.

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

III. Quick Burials: Supreme Court President Miguel Ortiz Passarelli ordered February 22 that in the future all decomposed bodies will be buried immediately after discovery. This measure has the effect of eliminating the medical autopsy usually performed in such cases in the past.

[redacted] B1 ED

IV. Possible Kidnapping Attempt Against Arana's Sisters: The most sensational internal security story of the month involved a possible kidnapping attempt against two half sisters of President Arana, Lesbia Valladares Osorio de Sajché (wife of the Controller General) and Delia Valladares Osorio. The press reported that as the women left a store in zone 4 of the capital they were forced into their own car by six young men armed with machine guns. The assailants attempted to depart with the women and their driver in the car, but were unable to start the vehicle because of ignorance of its automatic transmission. The women's screams drew crowds toward the scene, at which point the frustrated assailants fled, firing in the air to scare off possible pursuers. Sources in the National Agrarian Transformation Institute told reporters that the license plate number on the assailants' get-away car corresponded to that of a vehicle stolen from an INTA office in Quezaltenango. The press also reported that police had identified one of the attackers as a member of a leftist subversive organization.

V. "Death Squad" Claims Thirteen Victims: The clandestine "Death Squad" (Escuadrón de la Muerte) announced in a press release February 1 that in view of the "incapacity" of the police and the courts to control the wave of crimes throughout the country, the Escuadrón would "mercilessly" act against all criminals and delinquents. Within 24 hours after the announcement the clandestine group had shot its first six victims, who were found in various areas of the country with notes affixed to their bodies stating that the "Death Squad" had executed them because they were guilty of robbery or extortion. The Escuadrón's thirteenth and most recent strike occurred March 1 when the group tossed a man out of a running car and then shot him on a downtown street only a block from the Presidential Palace.

[redacted] B1 ED

P740026

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

[redacted] (B-1 JED)

incidents because all those who have been identified appear to have been common criminals uninvolved in politics.

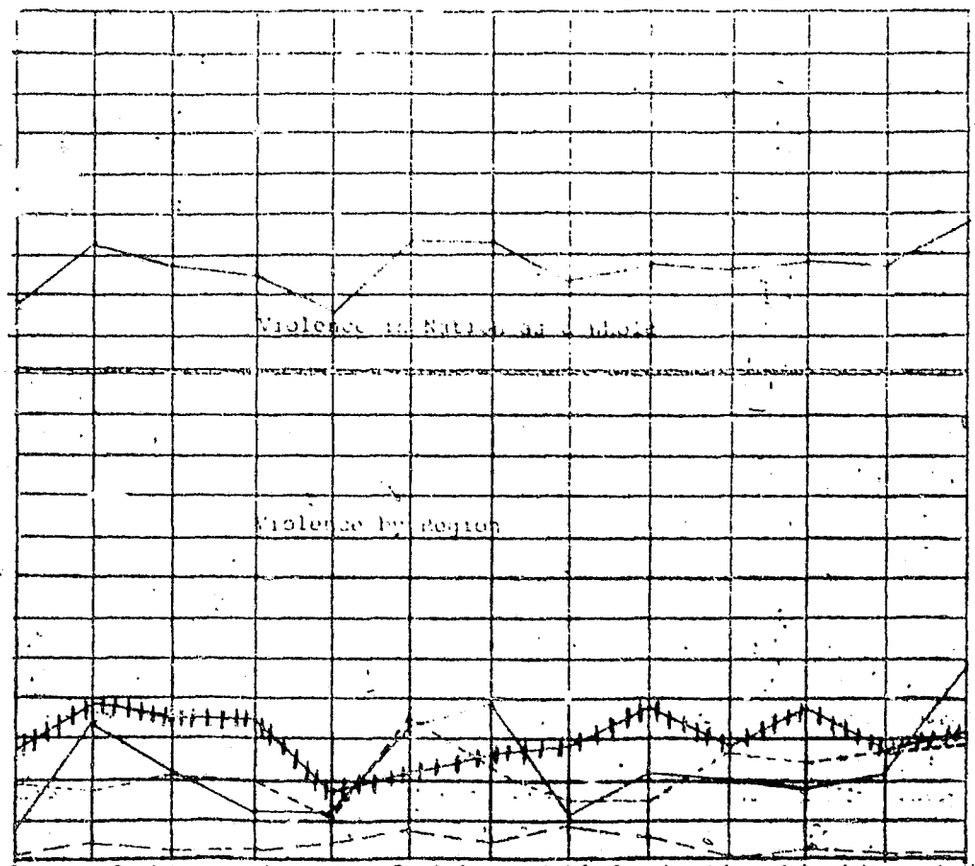
MELOY

CLASSIFIED BY Francis E. Meloy, Jr.
EXEMPT FROM GDS OF EO 11652
EXEMPT CATEGORY 5B (2)

DECLASSIFIED

Guatemala

POLITICAL INCIDENTS BY REGION - FEBRUARY 1973 to FEBRUARY 1974



TOTAL 77

For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and deaths, all of which appear to be politically motivated.

Capital Area - Sacatepequez, Guatemala

South Coast - San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa

Eastern Region - Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal, El Peten

Highlands - Totonicapan, Chimaltenango Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola

P740026 IN 58